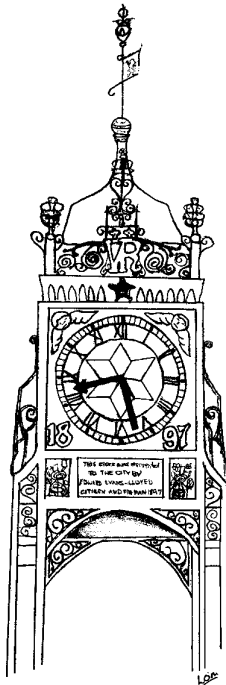


CHESTER CHRONICLES.....

Rust never sleeps!



EASTGATE CLOCK, CHESTER

“Where do you think you are going with that! That’s not a needle—that’s a chest drain!” “Oh come on now Dr O’Mahony! Don’t be a big girl’s blouse—it’s just a large bore needle. I need to aspirate some gunge out of this swollen knee of yours. There is no need for a local in a big chap like you.” In goes the needle and he sweeps it around breaking down loculations, while he is aspirating out the green gunge. It was the most excruciating pain imaginable (but then again I’m only a man). I had hoped for the nice delicate touch of our female rheumatologist, but her clinic had finished and all I could find was one of the orthopaedic consultants. How come our trust is blessed with orthopaedic surgeons who could all have come from the St Helen’s rugby league club front row. As he aspirated away, I consoled myself mentally with orthopaedic jokes, such as what’s the similarity between an orthopaedic surgeon and a rhinoceros? They’re both thick skinned, horny, and charge a lot. What best describes an orthopaedic ward round?—shifting dullness. “Right,” says the muscular orthopod. “You look terrible. You’re coming in for high dose intravenous antibiotics.”

It had all started innocently enough. The 10 year old Jag was rusting badly and I thought a splash of Hammerite rust proof paint would hold the car together. A few hours of kneeling on rough concrete didn’t seem a problem at that time, but three days later I had a swollen knee and felt awful.

The orthopaedic ward was from another planet. It was full of immortal young men, pondering the reality that in a bone to concrete or metal confrontation, bone loses out every time. The main topic of conversation on the ward was food or, more precisely, the lack of it. Hospital portions adequate for a frail 80 year old were mere morsels to these northern lads. I was delirious for three days and ate nothing. On the third day, I knew I was getting better, because suddenly I felt hungry. This joyous news was greeted with dismay, as it meant I would now be eating my food instead of passing it over to them.

Aspirations from consultant joints usually never grow anything but, thankfully, this one did—*Staph aureus*. I posted the result on the notice board because there was a scurrilous rumour abroad that the venereologist was in with gonococcal arthritis!

I was on antibiotics for three weeks. On the third week I was back doing a clinic and I noticed the staff looking peculiarly at me. When I looked in the mirror there were migrating red blotches all over my face and neck. I thought—oh no, I’m allergic to the ampicillin. I nipped across the corridor to the lovely female dermatologist, hoping for a quick confirmatory opinion, but she would have none of it. She wouldn’t even look at me until I was stripped bare and staked out for a full dermatological examination. Oh, the embarrassment! In my own hospital! After careful scrutiny, she declared it was an allergic reaction. Well—thanks a bundle! The loratadine did the trick and I ploughed on for the final week.

Awkward business that, being sick in your own hospital. However, I now know that one should always let sleeping rust lie.

Colm O’Mahony

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